

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN**  
**HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**FIELD HEARING IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA**  
**SOUTHERN BORDER VIOLENCE: STATE AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES**

APRIL 20, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for coming to Phoenix to preside over this important field hearing and to hear first hand from Arizona's local and state elected officials and law enforcement officers on the increasing violence along the U.S./Mexico border. I appreciate those who were invited to testify, but unable to attend, including Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who submitted written testimony. The committee is here today to hear from those who have the difficult job of securing the safety of the citizens of Arizona and the Nation despite the fact that our Southwest border is not yet as secure. And as we know all too well here in Arizona, violence associated with illegal drug traffic by the Mexican drug cartels is a real problem and must be addressed.

It is for that reason that I have joined the calls for the National Guard to be sent to the border. I look forward to hearing out witnesses ideas on the how best to deploy the Guard and what other solutions they propose be taken.

Due to the unsecure border and the high demand for illegal drugs in the United States, the drug cartels' activities are impacting the security of the United States and particularly border states like Arizona. The City of Phoenix is now the kidnapping capital of the United States and second only to Mexico City for the most kidnappings in any city in the world. The City of Nogales has seen several gun battles break out in broad daylight between Mexican police and the drug cartels just a couple of miles from the border. The City of Tucson has seen its crime rate increase this past year, especially for property crimes and car thefts. Each of these instances can be traced to an increase of violence along the Mexican border and the high demand for illegal drugs within the United States.

For these reasons, I was pleased that the Administration announced last month the addition of more personnel to the Southwest border, increased intelligence capability and better coordination with state, local and Mexican law enforcement authorities. But it is not enough. Instead, the United States has cut funding to the Mexican government for equipment, training and assistance promised as part of the Merida initiative. We have failed to stop the demand for drugs in the United States and been somewhat lax in preventing the transport of bulk caches of firearms to Mexico. Just last week, the Administration denied Governor Brewer's request for Federal support to add 250 more National Guard troops to be assigned at the border to the Joint Counter-Narcotic/Terrorism Task Force. This is an unacceptable response and I hope our witnesses will further explain the ramifications of that decision.

I hope that the hearing today will highlight the outstanding work that our state and local officials are performing to provide for the safety of Americans despite the unwillingness in some instances of the Federal government to provide the necessary resources to assist Mexico in its efforts against the drug cartel violence and to secure the Southwest border from the flow of drugs, money laundering and illegal immigration. We must do more, and the people at today's hearing know that fact far better than I can attest—I am very eager to hear from them today. Additional federal action is urgently needed and in my judgment, our failure to do more puts at risk the safety and security of our citizens each and every day.